



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

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Mayor James L. Streeter, Councilors Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Paulann H. Sheets, and Harry A. Watson

Friday, August 19, 2011

9:00 AM

Mystic Education Center, Oral School Rd.

SPECIAL MEETING

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Streeter, Councilor Johnson, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Sheets and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Councilor Flax, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro and Councilor Peruzzotti

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnahan.

2. NEW BUSINESS

Tour of Mystic Education Center with State Department of Administrative Services Representatives Starting at the Pratt Building

2011-0165

Status of Mystic Education Center

Discussed

Town Councilors, Town staff, and representatives from the State Department of Administrative Services (DAS), along with members of the press and public, met at the Pratt Recreation Building at 9:00 a.m. The group gathered in the auditorium and Shane Mallory of DAS introduced staff from the state and Donald DeFranzo, Commissioner of DAS. Mr. Mallory noted the availability of handouts (a map and property information). Mr. Mallory provided a history of the site that was a school for the deaf until 1982. The various buildings date from 1928 through 1974. In 2010, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) sent a reuse survey for the property to state agencies at which time the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) took control of two sections of the property.

The state has completed surveys of the property and will be meeting with Groton officials in September. The next step in declaring the property surplus is to have it appraised. It is then offered to the Town, which also has first right of refusal if there is an offer to purchase the property.

There is one remaining tenant on site whose lease expires on September 30th. With the state budget crisis, closing the virtually empty campus will save money,

Chief Ken Richards of the Old Mystic Fire Department noted that the Fire Department leases a portion of the property until 2022 for a fire training site. Mr. Mallory noted that the training site can operate for now and its continuance is open for discussion.

Dave Grigely of Facilities Management conducted a tour of the facilities. The Pratt Building includes an auditorium, two-lane bowling alley, pool and locker rooms, gymnasium, and handball court. The Pratt building has its own utility plant. The roof ranges from three to ten years old. The facade is decent with the exception of some humidity issues near the pool. Mr. Grigely noted that the costs savings associated with closing the Pratt building would be significant.

Representative Ted Moukawsher asked the state to provide a cost analysis specific to the Pratt building.

In the gymnasium, the floor is buckled due to moisture issues coming up through the floor. Replacing the floor would be very costly and would involve environmental issues due to mercury in the flooring.

The group next toured a renovated portion of the Administration building occupied by Alion, a defense contractor. Beyond the portion of the building occupied by Alion is the Whipple building which includes a cafeteria with environmental issues. The space was most recently used by the State Department of Developmental Services (DDS). The building has a newer roof and a decent facade and has an elevator that accesses former dormitory space.

The freestanding Crouter building, not accessible on the tour, was shop space and a gymnasium.

The Duran building, also not accessible on the tour, has environmental issues including mold. The building is comprised of classrooms, residential space, a cafeteria, and a gymnasium.

There are two ballfields on the site, one of which is used by Groton Parks and Recreation and others.

Mr. Grigely noted that the state would be willing to arrange a more in-depth tour for Town officials.

Representative Moukawsher asked for any reports or information available on the gymnasium floor in the Pratt building.

Chief Richards submitted a report on the use of the fire training site to State and Town officials.

Commissioner DeFranzo stated that it costs approximately \$600,000 per year to maintain the Mystic Education Center, and with no ongoing state use, it is not feasible to keep the facility open. The State surplus process does not involve a formal planning process, but because of the significant time that it takes to dispose of the property, an informal planning process with the Town can occur.

Mayor Streeter asked that any inquiries about the site be funneled through the Town Manager's office. Councilor O'Beirne asked if the State had made any effort in the past to market the property. Mr. Grigely stated no, and explained that leasing real estate is not one of the State's core functions.

Town Manager Oefinger thanked the representatives of the various state agencies for conducting the tour. At this point, the Town has not plans or ideas on reuse for the site. The Town Manager requested access to any and all studies of the property. He explained that the Town would also like to explore keeping the Pratt building open during this process. Mr. DeFranzo stated he would need a specific request from the Town for a specific period of time, however he noted that a significant portion of the maintenance costs are associated with the Pratt building and the heated pool. Doug Ackerman, current manager of Parks and Recreation, noted that alternative arrangements have been made for the programs that the Town conducts at the Pratt building, except for therapeutic swim programs that require higher temperature water.

Councilor Watson asked if there is any process for subdividing the property. Mr. Mallory stated that dividing the property would complicate the transfer process due to access and easement issues.

Commissioner DeFranzo recommended that the Town talk to DEEP about their plans for the property now under DEEP's control.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.